

REMARKS

Reconsideration and allowance of this application are respectfully requested.

By the present response, claims 1 and 14 have been canceled and claims 2-3, 9-10, 13, 15-16, and 18-23 have been amended. Thus, claims 2-13 and 15- 23 remain pending.

Entry of the forgoing is appropriate pursuant to 37 C.F.R. §1.116 for at least the following reasons. First, the amendments overcome the grounds of rejection and reduce the number of issues present upon appeal. Second, the amendments raise no new issues that would necessitate further search and/or substantive reexamination.

ALLOWABLE SUBJECT MATTER

Applicants note with appreciation the indication of allowable subject matter in objected claims 4, 17, 18, 21 and 23. By the present response, claims 21 and 23 have been written in independent form and are therefore considered allowable. Further, the remaining pending claims depend from either allowable claim 21 or allowable claim 23 and are therefore also considered allowable.

CLAIM REJECTIONS UNDER 35 U.S.C. §103

Claims 1, 2, 3, 5, 6-10, 13-16 and 19 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 4,196,088 to Nemec (hereafter "*Nemec*") in view of commonly assigned WO 00/18583 to Trovinger et al. (hereafter "*Trovinger et al.*") on the grounds set forth at paragraph 2 of the Official Action.

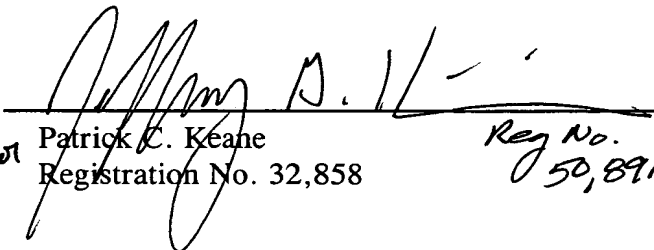
Claims 11, 12, 20 and 22 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over *Nemec* in view of *Trovinger et al.* and in further view of U.S. Patent No. 3,954,258 to Skipor et al. (hereafter "*Skipor et al.*") on the grounds set forth at paragraph 3 of the Official Action.

These rejections have been obviated by the amendments canceling claims 1 and 14 and amending the dependency of the remaining claims to be from allowable claims 21 or 23.

CONCLUSION

From the foregoing, all pending claims are considered allowable and further and favorable action in the form of a Notice of Allowance is earnestly solicited. Should the Examiner feel that any issues remain, it is requested that the undersigned be contacted so that any such issues may be adequately addressed and prosecution of the instant application expedited.

Respectfully submitted,

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